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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Memorandum dated 17 April 1996 from the Council of Arab Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives accredited to the United Nations Office in Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights

The Council of Arab Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives accredited to the United Nations Office in Geneva presents its compliments to the President of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights and has the honour to inform him of the following:

Since 11 April 1996, Lebanon has been the subject of a barbarous large-scale Israeli military aggression; over 50 villages, towns and cities have been the target of heavy devastating aerial, naval and land bombardments that have rapidly expanded to include Beirut and its suburbs. At the same time, the Israeli naval fleet is spreading in the Lebanese territorial waters imposing a blockade against the country's main ports.

This Israeli aggression has claimed a heavy toll on innocent civilian lives, inflicting numerous casualties among the civilian population and leading to the exodus of over half a million persons forced to flee their homes in southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa region. Moreover, this is

inflicting severe damage on vital socio-economic infrastructures extending from the destruction of three power generating plants which supply the Bekaa valley, the south and the capital, Beirut, and its suburbs. The consequences of these expanded Israeli aggressions and threats are adding up to create a dramatic humanitarian tragedy due to emptying of around 100 villages and main cities in southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa of their inhabitants who fled to Saïda, Beirut and the mountains.

This situation is bound to reach still greater proportions in light of the overtly expressed assertions by Israeli officials to pursue and intensify these operations. This aggression is undermining the entire Middle East peace process.

The Council of Arab Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives hence requests Your Excellency to issue a declaration condemning Israel's grave violations of human rights in Lebanon which include the right to life and a secure shelter, as well as condemning the killing of Lebanese civilians, causing mass displacement, the destruction of their properties and of Lebanon's economic infrastructure which constitute a grave violation of the Geneva Conventions and international law. The Council also calls upon the international community to intervene in order to protect the Lebanese civilians, and to provide them with urgent humanitarian assistance. In addition, the Council further demands the total immediate withdrawal of Israel's armed forces from all Lebanese territories in conformity with United Nations Security Council resolution 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978 and the full respect of Lebanon's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

The Council of Arab Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives further requests that the present memorandum be registered as an official document of the fifty-second session of the Commission on human rights under item 10.